

they have shown in their children and grandchildren, and continue to. I watched Joe Biden, with a sense of dignity, as he ran for election to the Presidency, an office he had hoped to hold and probably thought he never would.

I know that he wanted to run 4 years ago, but it was too close to the time of losing his son Beau. I had the privilege of knowing Beau. In fact, the last time I talked to him was on one of the battlefields in Iraq where he was serving in combat for our U.S. military. I told him at that time: You know, when I get back on the plane, I am going to call your father. I always do this when I meet a Vermonter in a war zone. I call their family and say they are doing well. I will call your dad and tell him.

When I got on the plane and connected with the White House operator, I remember then-Vice President Biden coming on. After a ways, he said: I know what you are going to say. I got an email from Beau.

I remember when Marcelle and I stood there and tears went down her face listening to President Obama eulogizing Beau at his funeral. We all felt as part of that family. So there was joy in the Leahy household when he was elected—not just a joy for the good of the country but the joy of seeing a person whom we know, love, and respect elected as President.

And added to that is the added advantage of KAMALA HARRIS, one of our Senate colleagues here. I remember when Senator HARRIS came to the Senate, and I was so happy to see her going on the Judiciary Committee because she had been such a good prosecutor and such a good attorney general. She was a woman who didn't need to have much of an orientation. She knew exactly what she was doing.

We have gotten to know her and her husband and admire her so. Then, when she spoke—as they accepted the fact that they were President and Vice President-elect—she said how proud she was to be there with President-Elect Biden and how proud she was to speak about her background and her immigrant parents coming here, the different races shown in her background, and what she was saying, as she said, to “women everywhere.” But I would say also what she shows to young women, those not old enough to vote, like my granddaughters, and they can look at that and say: That shows everything is open.

You know, I come from a State where it is unusual to be elected the first time because, well, I am the only Democrat ever elected to the U.S. Senate in Vermont's history, and the youngest also. I wasn't supposed to win. We were overwhelmingly a Republican State then. We have become now one of both parties. In the last election, for example, there was a Republican Governor. This year, in the last few days, our Republican Governor won overwhelmingly, and Molly Gray, a young woman that started out as an intern in my of-

fice and went to the University of Vermont, won comfortably and by a comfortable margin as a Democrat. But also, our Republican Governor said on election day that for the good of the country, to stop the dissension, to lower the kind of rhetoric we were hearing, he was going to vote for Joseph Biden.

Now, I mention that just as a microcosm in our State. But to go back to just a purely personal thing, Marcelle and I prayed for that day. We were so happy to see our friends. We were so happy to know they were there. And, as one who has known Joe Biden from the day I came into the Senate, I still remember, to this day, his coming over to greet me on the floor and saying: I am glad to see us young people here. I was about a year or so older than he, and we were sitting kind of in the junior role, and that friendship has lasted ever since.

I know Joe Biden. I know Jill Biden. I know the United States of America, and at a time when we are so torn apart, these are two people who can bring us back together.

I know KAMALA HARRIS. We know her wonderful husband. And here, my goodness, what a broad spectrum right there. In one way, it is unique. In another way, it is not the least bit unique. It is the face of America. It is the face of America. The diversity in our country of race, religion, everything—it is reflected in this ticket. It couldn't be better for the beginning of this century to have such a wide spectrum shown in the President and Vice President of the United States.

I think of what the mayor of Paris said. She issued a statement sort of to the effect of “Welcome back, America.” Well, this is an America that represents all of us. We should all get together to try to make it successful. If Senators disagree on a particular issue, vote up or down, but have the courage to vote. Have the courage to vote. Don't do what we have done this past year, refusing to vote on COVID as thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people die in our country. Have the courage to get up and vote. Vote yes or no.

We are here with 6-year terms. We ought to at least have the courage to vote yes or no. And then let's take a pause and say that these are the two who will be the face of America from noon, January 20.

From a personal point of view, that face reflects very much our family—our children and our grandchildren. I can see them in these four people, and I am proud of that.

I will admit that I have gotten a few emails from my Irish friends to say how much they are looking forward to a President Biden coming to Ireland, and they have forgiven me my Italian half with that. But I know that when I heard Joe Biden quoting Seamus Heaney during his campaign, I remember that he knows those Irish roots. But he, like his family, are first and

foremost Americans. Like his late, wonderful son Beau, they are first and foremost Americans.

KAMALA HARRIS speaks of her family, her ancestors coming here, her mother and father coming here, coming not to be anything other than Americans. They are as American as she is. She is as American as any of us.

I will close with this. Isn't it time the United States of America—a country that has become as diverse as you can imagine—can show their face to the rest of the world and say: This is who we are. And my grandchildren—my White grandchildren and my Black grandchildren—can look and say: Yes, that is who we are.

Joe and KAMALA, in a few days I will call you Mr. President and Madam Vice President, and I will do it with great pride. But I say today to my dear friends Joe and KAMALA: Congratulations. This Vermonter is very, very happy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, we may be back to work carrying out what should be the normal business of the Senate, but from what I have observed, the American people really don't see this as just another day. They are a little bit anxious, and I really think that it is because, over the past week, they have witnessed some of the most divisive news cycles in recent memory.

Allegations of voter fraud are running rampant. These have been unanswered and ignored by most media outlets. Liberal operatives have sent up test balloons on the creation of official enemies lists. Think about that. We have them making enemies lists, wanting to execute a campaign of personal destruction against people with whom they disagree. What does that say about treasuring free speech?

The most popular social media platforms—oh—have honestly just outdone themselves by making matters worse by slapping these scary labels on content that is meant to inform and to spark bipartisan debate.

Then you have email services that are locking down access to email lists because the distribution is something with which they disagree. This is what has happened to millions of Americans. They gasp every time they see these markers on content, when they can't get to an email list, when they hear about a group they belong to that they can't hear from or communicate with.

Yes, it is censorship, and it is something that has divided people, families,

neighbors, friends, coworkers, and colleagues.

I will tell you, many of them remain divided, but I think we have to say they have been engaged. According to the Pew Research Center, Americans participated in this election cycle at the highest rate in 120 years. Election officials still haven't finished their counts, and already we know that more than 144 million ballots were cast this cycle.

I would venture to say that many of those millions of individuals are watching us. They want to see what we are going to do next, how we are going to conduct ourselves. They don't really care if it takes a little multitasking; they are saying it is time for Congress to do its job.

You can look at all of the exit polling on the favorability ratings of Congress. I will say it is discouragingly low—the regard in which the American people hold their elected representatives collective body. It is time for us to get some things done.

Judging by the footage of demonstrations in many of America's major cities, you might not remember that we are still dealing with the effects of a global pandemic. It seems that for a few days, people forgot there is a pandemic.

Democrats in the House and the Senate have wasted months of precious time obstructing the passage of targeted COVID relief legislation that Tennesseans and New Yorkers and Californians and every other American who owns a business or supports a family needs not tomorrow or today; they needed it yesterday, last week, last month.

I have spent the past several months coming to this floor to tell the stories of Tennesseans, Tennessee small business people, Tennessee employers who are desperately in need of relief, trying to help my colleagues on the other side of the aisle understand that there is fear and pain in certain sectors of our economy. It is really so inappropriate that those fears and that pain are something they have chosen to ignore. To be frank, it has been like talking to a brick wall. There has been no response.

Just last week, I met with the board of the Academy of Country Music for a very hard discussion about the future of their industry. Not one single venue or one studio musician or one sound engineer—their whole industry shut down. This is an industry that has shut down. They did nothing wrong, mind you. They showed up for work. They built businesses. They hired people. They used independent contractors. They paid their bills. They paid their taxes. They did nothing wrong. But the entertainment industry—live entertainment—is shut down.

This isn't the huge record labels and big entertainment companies that many people think are the music industry. These are the mom-and-pops. These are the small businesses, the sole

proprietors, the independent contractors. These are the people who set up and tear down stages. They put on these amazing sound and light displays that people get so excited about seeing and that really make music and entertainment come to life. They produce the music that you walk around listening to in your earbuds. The support staff at the venues clean up your beer cans and ticket stubs after you have enjoyed a show. I tell you, they also are the artists, the storytellers, and I really think our creative and cultural historians.

This industry is absolutely dying. They are not the only ones. There are so many other sectors of our economy that are at a standstill. They are suffering, and so many other people have been suffering. They are tired of what they see as posturing here in DC, using the hurt and the suffering of people as just a political bargaining chip. Do you know what? They have noticed. They have been watching over the past few months. They know that very little has been accomplished, and they think it is time to stop putting politics over people. It is time to stop saying "We want the issue if it is good for us" because people are looking for solutions.

They were waiting for a mandate—our friends over on the left—a mandate they were sure was going to come their way on November 3, but the American people refused to deliver them a mandate. You see it in elections that took place at the local and the State level. You see it in the congressional elections and certainly here in this Chamber.

So far, Speaker PELOSI has refused any offer to compromise. Every offer and gesture that has been made by the White House or this Chamber has been refused. She has clung to that \$3 trillion parody of a relief bill that she has stuffed to the brim with billions for liberal pet projects that have nothing to do with COVID recovery—nothing at all. Isn't it interesting that her pet project is not the American people? Wouldn't you think she would want to solve some of these problems? But no—she would rather play politics.

This absurd delay has come at great cost. We have so many Tennesseans, indeed, across this country, millions of families and small businesses that will tell you they are in damage control mode because Democrats refuse to allow them the dignity of hope that targeted relief would provide. "Dignity"—that is a nice word. And we have so many people who are grasping, trying to pay their bills, keep their businesses alive. I will say that our friends across the aisle twice—twice, twice—have declined to vote for targeted relief.

It is not too late to step up on behalf of those who have lost just about everything and those who still have a shot at coming out on the other side of this pandemic with their livelihoods intact. It is not too late to pass legislation that would provide better unem-

ployment insurance, more help for small businesses, resources for schools and universities, vaccine research funding, testing funding, and liability protection—targeted relief for millions of Americans who have said: This what we need in order to keep people employed and to keep our businesses open.

The legislation is written. All that needs to happen is our friends across the aisle need to say: We are ready to vote on this package. Let's do another round of PPP. Let's do a plus-up in unemployment. Let's do that money for vaccines and testing and resources for schools and universities. Let's give companies the liability protection they need to open their doors. Let's give these entertainment venues the liability protection they need in order to again get on the road, have concerts, play that music Americans love to listen to. It is there.

To my friends, let's have no filibusters, no more distractions, and no more extravagant wish lists of pet projects. For goodness' sake, put your politics aside, and let's put the people first. Let's provide the relief they are seeking.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REELECTION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, before I make my remarks, I want to take a moment on the floor of the Senate to formally and officially thank the people of the State of Illinois for electing me to another term in the U.S. Senate.

On election night, when the results were apparent, I went and stared into an iPad to announce my victory speech. It was unlike anything I had ever been through in a campaign, and I said so. It was an extraordinary campaign experience, made even more difficult and challenging because of the pandemic crisis. I want to thank the people of the State for standing by me and giving me this chance to serve again.

I am honored to serve my State in this body, especially during this time of transition in America and transition around the world. Together, with a trust in science with the Biden-Harris administration, we will return to our national agenda. I am eager to continue working to help the families, small businesses, schools, hospitals, and constituents in my State and to help all of us in this country endure this pandemic together.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, COVID-19 did not take a day off for the election. While election week was brewing and all of us were glued to our television screens,